

Capitol as It Will Appear in 1908

A Diamond and Ruby Necklace

JUDGE ALGERNON GREENFIELD arrived at his friend Peter Tracy's house on a certain Saturday. The assizes were to commence on the following Monday morning in the prosperous town of Brookville. He was to occupy the bench on this occasion, and Tracy had long asked him to make his house his headquarters.

Peter Tracy was a rich man, and owned a lovely estate in the neighborhood of Brookville. The time was the middle of August, and the country was in its full summer splendor. When Greenfield stepped from the luxurious carriage, Tracy had seen to meet him at the railway station, and took the smooth young hand of his host's only daughter in his own, he could not help giving a sigh of pleasure.

"Until Monday I can enjoy myself," he thought, "and should soon have thought to crime and its attendant miseries."

Greenfield raised his full, dark eyes, and smiled in his face. "The nice to have you here again, Uncle Algeron," he said. "She was no relation, but from her hood she had called him by the familiar name."

"And it is very nice to come, Evelyn," he replied. "After the toils and the noise and fuss of London, this place seems like heaven. But haven't you some news, my girl, or did this beautiful little bird which flies over the world, to East and West, North and South, whisper in my ear in vain?"

The girl blushed very vividly. "What did it tell you?" she asked.

"Well, that I should have to put my hand in my pocket and present some one with a wedding present."

Evelyn smiled, and then she sighed. "I am going to say a very reasonable thing," was her next remark. "Late wedding presents, I have had great many, and the most expensive of all has put me into fearful trouble. I should like to tell you, my dear."

"Only what, Evelyn? Why, should you not let me share your anxieties? That is, if you really have any."

"I have indeed. Only Christopher and father both said that I ought not to tell you. It might be unfair, it might be prejudicial to you."

"It sounds very serious and alarming, but pray tell me first if Christopher is here, and are you very much in love with him?"

"Yes, Christopher is here; he is coming down the walk to meet us. I will introduce him."

A good-looking man of about eight-and-twenty years of age came forward. His name was Christopher Selkirk. He had loved Evelyn for years, and their marriage, which was to take place in a few months, time, was regarded by the friends on both sides as a singularly happy one. Judge Greenfield was pleased to meet the young man, and soon they were chatting together, Evelyn walking to Selkirk, and he laid lightly on the judge's arm. They approached a small summer-house, and the three entered.

It was then that Judge Greenfield for the first time remarked that his favorite's eyes, notwithstanding her real and great happiness, were full of sadness, and that her pretty face was paler than its wont.

"What is the matter, Evelyn? You must tell me, Selkirk happens to say to me the contrary. May I not share your troubles with regard to the wedding presents; one in particular has given you trouble. May I not share your troubles?"

"Indeed you may, Uncle Algeron, even if you are twenty times a judge."

"You ought to tell me," said Selkirk, but Evelyn did not mind.

"We are very unhappy about it," she said at once. "The more comes, the more goes. I will tell you, but just when it comes to the point."

To the judge's eyes, Evelyn burst into tears. Mr. Selkirk, who had been absent when the judge arrived, now hurried forward.

"Delighted to see you, my dear friend, Evelyn in tears! What about?"

"You must tell me, my dear friend, Evelyn. I am so miserable. I miss her so much. I wish there were no such terrible things in the world as poverty and distress. She left the summer-house, Selkirk immediately following.

"Poor little girl," said Tracy, when he found himself alone with his friend. "I did not want to tell you, Greenfield, for you will have to judge the poor, miserable creature."

"But you must tell me, my friend. Your dear little daughter is miserable—so miserable that even in the presence of my best friend she bursts into tears! What has happened? I shall not have an easy minute until I find out."

"It is this—the trouble is pretty big, although I don't make it of it. It has shaken Evelyn terribly. You must know that when her mother died, my little girl was not a day more than five years old, and she was committed to my care, and also to the care of a faithful nurse of the name of Rebecca. From that moment Rebecca was trusted as one would trust a member of one's own family. A most affectionate and devoted woman. She was married at the time of my dear wife's death, and her son was my Evelyn's foster-brother. When he was a baby, my wife was allowed to be near her, and he and Evelyn used to play and romp together. When he was a little older, he was sent to school, and by-and-by, apprenticed him to a stonemason. He was clever, and apparently an upright young fellow, and for a long time did his trade. But soon after his eighteenth birthday he took an extraordinary turn, got with a scrupulous conscience, and gave his master a great deal of anxiety. He became heavily in debt, and the poor woman used up the savings of years in vain to get him out of the incubus. In the end I persuaded her to let the young man go to America, arranged to pay his passage, and gave him a little money to start fresh in another country. The last of him, I hoped that I had seen the last of him, but three months ago he returned unexpectedly. Evelyn told me, for Rebecca would not, herself, mention the fact. Evelyn saw him skulking about the place after dark, and evidently waiting to see his mother. I spoke to Rebecca on the subject, and she told me that she denied that Jacob was back in England. Evelyn maintains stoutly, however, that beyond doubt she saw the man. We did not give the circumstance a great many thoughts, however, for my child was then engaged to be married, and was so full of life, and the preparation for her marriage, that even more important things than the return of Jacob Hickson would not have concerned us."

"For the last month Evelyn has been the recipient of some beautiful and valuable gifts. Among other presents Selkirk's mother, Lady Esther, sent the child a magnificent diamond and ruby necklace. The necklace was of immense value. It had been in the Selkirk family for generations, and was said to have been bought by Queen Elizabeth to the then reigning lady of the house on her marriage. Christopher is now in prison charged with the robbery, but without success, until just at the eleventh hour—namely, week ago—when suspicion of undoubted character was shed upon the doings of that unfortunate woman, Rebecca Hickson. Lady Esther heard of this, and insisted on the law taking its course, with the result that Hickson is now in prison charged with the theft. She will confess nothing. Her unscrupulous son has been seen in the neighborhood since the loss of the necklace. You

will, of course, hear the evidence later on, so perhaps it is unfair to tell you any more."

"I am glad you have told me so much," answered Judge Greenfield. "What a faithful to be tempted to commit a theft of such enormity!"

"You must try to imagine that she is innocent until you can prove her guilty," was Tracy's remark. "I fear I have done wrong, and perhaps injured the unfortunate creature by telling you the story in advance."

"What you have said will make no difference in my judgment," said Greenfield. "You understand that a judge has so to train his mind that he addresses the jury simply on the evidence given at the time of the trial. My wish would be to clear the poor woman. I see that Evelyn is unhappy."

"Unhappy! She is wretched. She was devoted to her old nurse. She has gone back in a frantic state of grief."

"And what about Selkirk himself? Does he mind the loss?"

"He does for his mother's sake; but he is the sort of a man who thinks nothing whatever of his own losses. He is a brave and can't imagine why Evelyn should trouble herself with a trousseau."

"What do you mean? Why should he have anything to do with it?"

"Nothing. It is only a matter of this kind one likes to look round and see where a possible loophole can appear. Is not that what you call a loophole?"

"Yes, I saw to that myself. I am paying Judge Selkirk to look after the matter. I got a first-class K. C. from town to undertake her case."

"Perceive. You will meet him at dinner this evening."

And then, understanding her anxiety, Evelyn Tracy did her utmost to make the evening a pleasant one for her dear old friend, Greenfield. When his meal was over, the drawing room she sat by his side, and when he begged her to sing for him she obliged him by singing a few notes of a troubled melody, although the subject of the necklace was not again alluded to.

Among the guests was Lady Esther Selkirk, a proud and imperious-looking woman, who was the father of the necklace, and they were waiting for the night."

"I have learned that you are acquainted with the fact that the necklace, and so long an heirloom in our family, has been stolen," was her remark.

"I am glad to know beforehand. Had no one else mentioned it, I should have been sure that the necklace was stolen. Only to yourself, will get that wretched woman, who is now in prison, to confess to the theft of the necklace. I have no doubt."

Nothing further was said with regard to the theft on the following day, and Greenfield was glad of it, although he himself was not at all satisfied with the result.

On Monday the assizes began, and many cases were tried before this well-known judge. It was on the second day that Rebecca Hickson appeared before his lordship for judgment. The circumstantial evidence against her was so strong, and she was known to be badly in want of money, owing to the fact that her son had impoverished himself, that she was almost certain to be found guilty.

It was Thursday of assize week when Rebecca Hickson appeared before his lordship. The necklace was the talk of every one at Tracy's table. Selkirk, in particular, was very much interested in the case. Rebecca Hickson is a very hot and almost intemperate fellow.

His wife, Lady Esther, "your son to prove him with clothes and luxuries of different kinds. He had, beyond doubt, been very much in want of money, and the necklace was the only thing that he had left. He was in a very hot and almost intemperate fellow."

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horhood had seen him. One man, the under-gardener at Brookville, had seen Lady Esther, but I do not think you will ever see the necklace again."

"The good lady," said Evelyn, "the thing," mumbled Selkirk under his breath.

After dinner he and Evelyn went out. The lock had been broken, the sky cloudless. The August full moon floated majestically in the heavens.

"I do wish she would confess," said Selkirk. "Her obstinate silence with regard to the necklace has given her son tells so much against her."

"I went on my knees to her," said Evelyn. "I begged her to confess, but she would not. I am innocent, my darling. I know I shall have to go to prison, but I won't tell you. I won't. You must trust me, Miss Evelyn. I never took the necklace, but I know you are black against me. Still, I won't tell."

As Evelyn spoke she burst into tears. Selkirk, who had been so much against her, now felt very sorry and depressed himself.

The two talked for a little longer, and then Selkirk went off to bed, confessing that he had a bad headache and could not stay up any longer. He was very tired, and he was very much against her. Still, I won't tell."

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An Interesting Story of Its Supposed Theft and How It Was Recovered

By L. T. MEADE

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